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137 trees that have not been checked by the late fires continue to put on new green leaves. By mid-rains grass and undergrowth has sprung up higher than a man's head and the bush looks quite impenetrable a few yards ahead. Young shoots stand a foot or two high all over the motor tracks. With the turn of the cold weather the country dries up once more. Dust lies six inches deep along the roads and coats the leaves and branches of the trees about 500 yards each side.

•487 Access to the Bemba country has always been easy, at any rate along its western and southern borders. The history of the country is one of a series of invasions from the Katanga Basin to the west up the big rivers such as the Luapula. One of the main Arab trade-routes also passed across the district from north-east to south-west, and this fact materially influenced the history of the people during the nineteenth century. Although the railway line bends N.W. at Broken Hill, four hundred miles to the south of the district, the Cape to Cairo motor route passes right across it, and the natives have easy access to the mining districts of Northern Rhodesia and the Congo. Motor roads (earth tracks would be a better description) serve to connect the head-quarters of the district. But the life of the country still moves in a single file along the native paths, except where a few big rivers and swamps make it possible to use dug-out canoes.

132 The climate is of an inter-tropical type. The country lies south of the equator, but the plateau stands at an average height of 4,000 ft. above sea-level and the nights are almost invariably cool and even cold, whatever the temperature by day. The seasonal variations in climate are very marked. In the hot season of the year, which falls between August and November, the temperature varies from an annual average minimum of 61° to a maximum of 89°. Between 1925–31 the highest temperature reached was 108°. In the hot months the weather is oppressive, ending in heavy thunderstorms. At the end of this time the ground is hard and impossible to cultivate, and the forest fires have swept the country. The rivers are low and in some cases dried up.

The rains break at the end of October or the beginning of November, and the maximum rainfall—is usually experienced in December. The average annual fall varies from three inches in November to over nine inches in December and January. There is occasionally a temporary break (*icilala*) in the weather at

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251 drying—a process which is believed to destroy the vitamin content of vegetables.[1]

Gourds, fruit, &c. Gourds may be kept a few months, but not pumpkins. I once saw a small temporary granary of *mpundu* fruit, but I think this is very rare.

Roots, mushrooms, &c. Sweet potatoes, mushrooms, and caterpillars are preserved by a process of parboiling (*ukufubula*) and subsequent drying in the sun. These foods are used during the hunger months but are declared to be insipid.

Cassava is not stored, but eaten from the beds as wanted.

Meat and fish are not preserved in large quantities, because the supply is very scanty, but in each case the raw flesh is smoke-dried [438] over the open fire. There is some trade in dried fish preserved in this way.

Granaries and Storing Vessels

343 361 [487] The approach to a Bemba village is usually up a narrow, overgrown path, winding through untidy beds of pumpkins, beans, or maize. On the outskirts, the first buildings that catch the eye are the village granaries—lath and plaster cylinders with thatched roofs ranged in an irregular circle round the dwelling places. 343 These grain bins are of varying sizes, but measure usually about 10 feet high and 20 feet in circumference, and are raised on uprights about a foot from the ground. Each granary stands as near as possible to its owner's hut, the majority round the outside of the village, but a few scattered here and there inside. To European eyes, they are often untidy and inefficient looking constructions. The supports are sometimes unevenly placed, so that the whole structure seems to tilt to one side. The walls may be whitewashed [531] and painted with red, yellow, and black earth, but more often they are just roughly daubed with clay which cracks in the sun. The grass used for thatching is never cut evenly or bound round the edge, and therefore hangs in wisps of different lengths. But these granaries, though they do not conform to our artistic standards, are nevertheless the measure by which the prosperity of a village is very largely judged. Many huts with few grain bins mean few adult male householders in the community. Cracking walls, or

[1] Cf. the statement that the women of Nigeria dry their leaves in the shade in order to preserve their food value, quoted E. B. Worthington, 'Food and Nutrition of the African Native', *Africa*, vol. ix, 1936, p. 158.